

**REMARKS**

Claims 1 and 11 have been amended. No claims have been added or canceled. Accordingly, claims 1-20 are currently pending in the application.

**Priority**

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the claim for priority. Submitted herewith is the certified priority document (JP-2000-389956, filed December 19, 2000). An indication that the document has been safely received would be appreciated.

**Information Disclosure Statement**

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the documents listed on the PTO-1449 Form. However, the foreign patent document JP-4-158478 was submitted with a translation, and the PTO-1449 Form did not indicate that a translation was enclosed. Therefore, Applicants are resubmitting a new PTO-1449 Form listing JP-4-158478 along with an indication that a translation is included. In addition, a copy of this document and its translation are enclosed.

Since the translation had originally been submitted with the originally filed application, it is submitted that no fee should be required. Applicants kindly request the Examiner to initial and sign the attached PTO-1449 Form to acknowledge receipt of the translation.

#### **Specification**

The Abstract has been rewritten in better form as required by the Examiner.

#### **Claim Objections**

Applicants believe that claims 7-10 and 12-15 are in proper form since they refer to the method claims 6 and 11. Although these claims start out with a preamble defining a system, the claim itself is a method claim. Therefore, claims that depend upon these independent claims should further define the method.

Since this is a relatively minor point, the Examiner is hereby invited to contact the undersigned with any questions to promptly resolve this issue and expedite the prosecution of this application.

**35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103**

Claims 1-11 and 13-20 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Itonori et al. Claim 12 stands rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itonori et al in view of Kubota. These rejections are traversed as follows.

According to the present invention, a document information retrieval method is realized which allows for OCR character recognition errors and enables a search within a practical length of time even when the search character string is long. This is accomplished while at the same time reducing the chance of documents being missed during the search (see specification page 4, line 25 to page 25, line 4). Claim 11 has been amended to specify that the expanded word generation methods include a method of adjusting the number of expanded search characters strings. Claims 1, 6 and 16 specifically recite a character string dividing device (or step) to divide the entered character string into a plurality of partial character strings each having a plurality of characters (or a predetermined number n of characters).

It is submitted that none of the cited references whether taken individually or in combination teach these features of the present invention. For example, Itonori et al disclose a

method and apparatus for image based to document processing in which retrieval can be performed with little oversight. As stated in Itonori et al's abstract, in retrieval, a retrieval executing element converts each character in the retrieval key word into a nearest category, and retrieves a document including the converted category string as a part of the result of retrieval. Kubota discloses that a unique character string is extracted from an input document and a similarity search is performed by using the unique character string (see abstract).

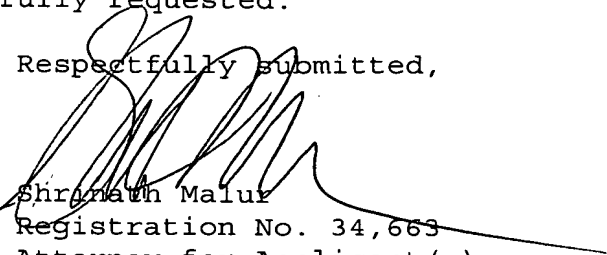
Claim 1 of the present invention clearly recites that the character string that is entered is entered in order to for searching image information of documents. Claim 1 has been amended to remove this phrase from the preamble and place it into the body of the claim in order to be more positively recited. As such, it is submitted that the pending claims patentably define the present invention over the cited art.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants contend that the above-identified application is

now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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